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Ornithological Literature

Edited by Mary Gustafson

BIRDS OF CHILE. By Alvaro Jaramillo, illustrated by Peter Burke and David Beadle. Princeton University Press, Princeton, New Jersey. 2003: 240 pp., 96 color plates. ISBN: 0691004994, $55 (cloth). ISBN: 069117403, $29.95 (paper).—South America has the most extensive bird fauna of any continent, yet for many years lacked adequate field identification guides. For much of the continent, the lack of field guides has now been remedied with a series of books that vary in quality; however, for temperate South America, there were no good (and readily available) field guides. Now, with the present work, one more piece of the jigsaw puzzle has been provided—extremely well.

The book sets out to be a field identification guide, so does not purport to provide information on such topics as nesting or ecology that might be expected in a more comprehensive type of handbook. It employs the user-friendly "facing-page" format; that is, the illustrations are on one page and the text and range-maps are on the facing page, saving the inconvenience of having to look in two places at once. The text and plates make up the bulk of the book's 192 pages. There is a useful one-page introduction; four pages on how to use the book; three informative pages on Chilean habitats; worthwhile sections on migration, vagrancy, seabirds, field identification, and conservation; and a glossary. At the rear of the book is an excellent appendix on current taxonomic problems—which are numerous—and I am glad to note that the author is not afraid to admit that more work is needed to resolve these taxonomic issues.

In the field-identification section, there is a brief general comment at the top of the page on the species or genera therein. Each species account includes a comprehensive section on identification and how to distinguish the species from similar-looking species, and notes about habitat, calls, and songs. The plates illustrate the most important features of each species; sexes and immature plumages are illustrated where necessary, as well as some distinctive races. Occasionally, little vignettes are included, illustrating such things as the feeding behavior of storm-petrels or close-ups of the bills of flamingoes. The book also provides one of the best treatments that I have read on molt sequences in gulls, terns, and jaegers and how they affect identification; this information could be just as useful in North America as in Chile.

Above all else, a field guide will be judged by the quality of its plates, and the plates in *Birds of Chile* are excellent. Having more than one artist contribute to a field guide often leads to an unsatisfactory final product, given differences in the styles and abilities of the artists; that is not the case here. Burke and Beadle have compatible styles, and the overall standard of the illustrations is very high.

The format and size of the book limit the scope of the species accounts; nevertheless, all relevant details necessary for identification are given, and the book was obviously written by a field ornithologist for field ornithologists. Emphasis is given to truly useful field identification features rather than details more appropriate for a museum collection. The combination of text and plates is superior to that of any other book presently and easily available for the same geographic area. In addition to Chile, the book also covers the Falkland Islands, South Georgia, and the area of Chilean claims in Antarctica (which overlap with Argentinean and British claims—including the South Shetlands, the South Orkneys, and the Antarctic Peninsula).

For other field guides, I have frequently been critical of the range maps, which often seem to be ill-considered afterthoughts with little regard for clarity or accuracy. This does not apply here. Admittedly, Chile—which is as narrow as 100 km in some places but has a latitudinal span equal to that between Washington, D.C., and the mouth of the Amazon—presents a unique mapping problem that has been solved by splitting the maps into as many as three sections. This takes a little get-

ting used to, but the maps convey the species' ranges legibly and precisely.

One rather pleasant feature of the book is the inclusion of local Spanish (or rather, Chilean) names for birds. This feature will be useful in talking to locals, who are frequently knowledgeable about local fauna but unfamiliar with official names—just as a Newfoundland fisherman will look at you blankly when asked about Long-tailed Ducks (*Clangula hyemalis*) or Greater Shearwaters (*Puffinus gravis*), but will tell you exactly where to find the "hounds" and the "hagdowners." In fact, some of these local names are much more picturesque and poetic than the clumsy English-language equivalents. For example, the Wren-like Rushbird (*Phleocryptes melanops*) is a "worker," the White-tailed Kite (*Elanus leucurus*) a "dancer," the Groove-billed Ani (*Crotophaga sulcirostris*) (mysteriously) a "horse-killer," and nightjars are "blind hens." With names like these, who needs polysyllabic and humorless official versions anyway?

The book contains a few errors, the most blatant being much missing text (at least in my copy) in the account on the Juan Fernandez Firecrown (*Sephanoides fernandensis*), undoubtedly due to someone inadvertently pressing the delete key. A determined nit-picker could list a few more errors; however, the function of a reviewer is to give an overall appraisal of the success or failure of a work rather than to zero in on trivia (the missing text on the firecrown can be obtained at www.birdsofchile.com/errata.htm), and I find that the *Birds of Chile* is an excellent addition to the literature on South American birds. Not only will it be essential to anyone visiting this "skinny little country" (to quote the author), it will also be extremely useful to visitors of nearby countries for which there are no good field guides—notably Argentina and, to a lesser extent, Bolivia. With this in mind, the present work would have proven more useful if it had provided the non-Chilean ranges of species. This could have been done in a concise and abbreviated format without adding significantly to the length of the text. Apart from this minor quibble, the author, artists, and publishers have produced a field guide of superior quality and reasonable price. They are to be commended for a job well done.—DAVID BREWER, Puslinch, Ontario, Canada; e-mail: mbrewer@albedo.net

PENGUINS: LIVING IN TWO WORLDS. By Lloyd S. Davis and Martin Renner, illustrated by Sarah Wroot. Yale University Press, New Haven, Connecticut, 2004: 200 pp. + xii, 8 color plates, 28 line drawings, 20 black and white photos, 27 graphs, 7 tables. ISBN: 0300102771. $40 (cloth).—One of two major themes in this book is that penguins must be like fish because they spend most of their lives at sea; but because they are birds and therefore lay eggs, they must also have attributes that allow a terrestrial existence while breeding. Throughout the text, then, the authors describe the specializations and compromises involved in this bimodal lifestyle. Such is the lifestyle of all seabirds to greater or lesser degrees, but the penguins have exploited the aqueous environment like no other group of extant avian species, with the exception of loons and grebes. However, as the authors point out in a chapter on evolution, the penguins stand alone in their adaptations to swimming and diving among the several families that are flightless.

The book's other major theme revolves around the dichotomy in natural history patterns that exists between inshore and offshore foragers. I have always been annoyed at the use of such terms in the literature on seabirds or other marine taxa because these terms lack substance and are confusing in this context. For example, I have seen them used in habitat descriptions of Antarctic krill (*Euphausia superba*). What Davis and Renner really mean is that some species of penguins forage close to penguin colonies and others forage farther away—the cutoff for their purposes being 50 km. The terms inshore and offshore connote habitat rather than distance. If authors mean distance traveled during foraging—and I just reviewed a paper that used 40 km to distinguish inshore from offshore locations—then they should say so (i.e., short- versus long-distance foragers). If they want to connote foraging habitat, then the appropriate terminology would be neritic versus pelagic, with the continental slope being a transitional habitat that lies between them. Treating this terminology with more rigor has become even more